Salisbury University
Nabb Research Center
for Delmarva History and Culture
Chesapeake Bay

Shoreline

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Collection Spotlight: Glass Plate Negatives

By Rebecca Brooks

The above image is from a Brown glass plate negative. The location and exact date of the homes in this image is unknown. However, glass plate negatives were used from about 1851 to 1920. If anyone can assist in the identification of the image, contact the Center at 410-543-6312 or via email at rcdhac@salisbury.edu.

August's Spotlight on Collections is devoted to collodion glass plate negatives from photographer E. I. Brown. The pictures were donated in June by Robert S. Withey in memory of his father, C. Robert Withey, who recently passed away. Withey was a member of the Wicomico Historical Society and Somerset County Historical Society. To mark his passing, the Nabb Center would like to honor the restorative work he accomplished in our community – chiefly Bounds Lott and Teackle Mansion.

The glass plate negatives from the Brown Collection are a great example of early photographic techniques. There were two basic types of glass plate negatives – collodion wet plate and gelatin dry plate. The collodion process, invented in England in 1851 by Frederick Scott Archer, used a light-sensitive glass plate prepared just before exposure. The gelatin dry plate process replaced the collodion process because dry plates could be prepared long before exposure. As a result, professional photographers were able to travel with fewer supplies and amateurs were able to take their own pictures. In the 1880s Kodak introduced cameras, which included their own film, similar to the disposable cameras used today. Once the film was used, the photographer sent the camera back to Kodak where the pictures were developed and returned to the buyer with new film loaded.

The Nabb Center was able to have all the glass plate negatives donated by Withey digitally captured. The scanned images are positives and can be printed. Today's technology allows us to recapture images from the past. As mentioned last month, photos are always wonderful additions to the archives, but more so when the subjects are identified. To learn more about how to care for, properly identify, house and possibly scan your own photographs, be sure to attend the Nabb Center's Photo Preservation Workshop on Sept. 9. For more information, see the advertisement in this newsletter.

In memory of
C. Robert Withey
1914-2003

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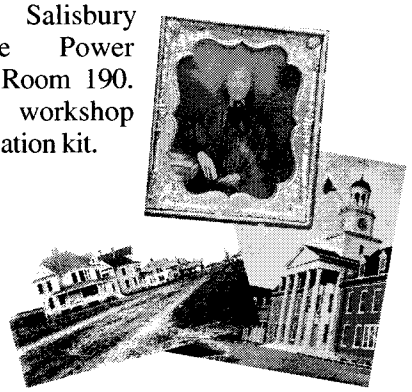
Call for Volunteers. . .

The staff of the Nabb Center is requesting volunteers to help man its booth at the Pemberton Colonial Fair and Heritage Festival on Sept. 27 and 28. To volunteer call 410-543-6312.

Upcoming Events

October 20, 2003
The Nabb Research Center will hold a Family History Month open house on Oct. 20 from 12-7 p.m. for those interested in researching and sharing their family history. Participants are encouraged to bring family materials such as photos, memorabilia, Bibles and old postcards. Center staff will be available to answer genealogy questions and offer advice for performing research. For information call 410-543-6312.

November 10, 2003
In celebration of Native American History Month the Nabb Research Center will host two pine needle basket weaving workshop sessions on Nov. 10. The first session will be from 1-3:30 p.m. and the second session will be from 5-7:30 p.m. Dawn Manyfeathers will demonstrate how to create a needle coil basket. No experience is necessary. The cost of the workshop is $25, however, students and Center members receive a $5 discount. Space is limited. For information call 410-543-6312.

Nabb Center to Host Photo Preservation Workshop

The elements we don't use in our photo albums and storage boxes are as important as the ones we do use. To find the proper techniques for preserving precious family photographs, the Nabb Research Center invites you to join Archivist Rebecca Brooks and Photographer Jeanne Anderton of CJZ Photography as they teach you how to save your favorite family pictures and slides so they will last for generations to come. Participants will learn professional techniques to preserve old or worn photographs, how to properly store them as well as digital preservation techniques. The workshop will be held on Sept. 9, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the Center on the East Campus of Salisbury University in the Power Professional Building, Room 190. The $25 cost of the workshop includes a photo preservation kit. Students and Center members will receive a $5 discount. For information call 410-543-6312.